TEACHING METHODOLOGY

MANUAL

Inspiring students on and off the mat

The correct application of yogic knowledge and implementation
of personality inside and outside the yoga hall.

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Don´t stop
when you are tired.
STOP
when you are
DONE".

Research is creating
new knoledge".

Neil Armstrong

Voluntary Simplicity

"Go confidently in tñññññhe direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined. As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler."

–Henry David Thoreau

Part of the loving embrace of the world, a hallmark of Tantric philosophy, is non- attachment. Like a hand that remains open, what is held can be allowed to leave if it becomes unnecessary. That same hand remains open and inviting for what is helpful to us. In contrast, the hand that is always tightly closed both constricts what we hold dear and is closed to new experiences. The mindful observance of this process is just another part of yoga practice. In asana practice there is a systematic approach to managing this energetic flow of drawing in and letting go.

In order to live a full life of simplicity, it is necessary to clarify what is of value to us, and what is not. We see beauty in many things, and those things remain beautiful whether we own them or not. Running from, renouncing or reacting against beauty because we cannot own it does not solve the problem of the ego's desire for ownership. One of the qualities of ownership is that a thing belongs to us, and not to anyone else. In this way ownership can create more separation — the opposite of union — and more suffering. In practice we could look at a beautiful lawn or garden and appreciate its beauty fully, and likewise consider the process at work when we begin to covet it as our own.

We are at best stewards of what we temporarily possess. The earth we build our homes upon had been here for millennia before we put up fences to enclose it.

The earth will likely be here a long time after we are gone. This broad understanding relates directly to our daily lives. Simplicity creates clarity. Clarity allows inner wisdom to reveal itself. By living simply, more time becomes available to enjoy nature and other people. Things that are often taken for granted such as the ability to walk, to eat and digest food, to be able to listen fully to another and to understand our own motivations, are all appreciated more fully. In the absence of distraction we see more clearly our habits, the things we gravitate toward, and the things we tend to avoid. A set of dogmatic rules pertaining to simplicity would be contrary to the aim of yoga, which is to deepen inner wisdom and connection to our source.

Principles of Simplicity

- Question what is of true value to you.
- Engage in work that is in alignment with what you truly value.
- Live close to your place of work.
- Decide what you need per year monetarily to live well and experience life fully.

"Discard the false notion that the material universe is separate from spirit. A single creative force emanating from omnipresent Consciousness produces various aspects of itself to manifest and sustain the universe. Knowing this, be firmly resolved to live with enlightened understanding in this world."

Roy Eugene Davis

The Practice and Service of Teaching Yoga

"There is a fundamental purpose for our lives. To know it, we must understand where life comes from and where it is going. We must consider life's highest potential for development and look beyond our immediate goals to what we ultimately want to accomplish."

Paramahansa Yogananda

Yoga is the scientific art of understanding the Self. It begins with simple things like noticing the placement of hands and feet on a mat, and the movements and actions of the body. As the practitioner's mindfulness and skill increases, perception increases as well.

Yoga becomes both the stone that sharpens the edge of the tool and the tool itself. As Yogis, our ability to see more clearly, to notice not just the forms of postures and flow of the body's energy, but to see our own moods, desires, and fears will also become honed. This is why a regular self-practice of yoga is essential as a teacher. We cannot help our students without first honoring ourselves.

Teaching yoga is one of the highest forms of service there is. Yoga can heal the body, bring equanimity to the mind, and re-connect people with their true nature and with each other. Blending compassion with non-attachment and self-honoring, a teacher's abilities will grow and refine over the years. However, teaching too many classes, neglecting personal practice, or allowing the ego to become overly attached to praise or criticism can lead to a decreased connection with the Self and, in the end, pose great difficulty for a teacher. Teaching yoga can be one of the best ways to remain a dedicated student.

Teaching yoga is challenging. Creating a sacred space, inspiring students to give their best, and balancing determination with playfulness all require practice.

Noticing the initial mood of the class and meeting the students where they are takes a high degree of observation. As a teacher, you must create a lifestyle that supports your yoga practice, and your teaching practice.

Overview of Yoga Styles

A variety of paths of yoga continue to intertwine and inform each other. Some examples are:

- ***Anusara Yoga:*** Developed by John Friend in 1997; unifies a heart-centered Tantric philosophy with bio-mechanical principles of alignment.
- ***Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga:*** Developed by T. Krishnamacharya and his student Pattabhi Jois; systematic and sequential approach to the asana practice where the postures are stratified into series. Vinyasa, an energetic linking from one asana to another, is used to create and maintain heat and a moving meditative state.
- ***Ashtanga Yoga:*** Called so by Baba Hari Dass, after Patanjali's Eightfold Path, not to be confused with Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga.
- ***Bikram's Yoga:*** A sequence of twenty-six postures in a room heated to over 100o Fahrenheit.
- ***Iyengar Yoga:*** B.K.S. Iyengar, another of Krishnamacharya's students, refined his understanding of his Guru's teachings after moving to Pune. He abandoned the Vinyasa style and focused his teaching on health, structural alignment, and therapeutic benefits of the postures.
- ***Kundalini Yoga:*** Awakening energy; Kundalini Yoga arrived in the West in 1969, when Sikh Yogi Bhajan challenged tradition and began to teach it publicly. This practice is designed to awaken Kundalini energy, which is stored at the base of the spineand often depicted as a coiled snake. Kundalini mixes chanting, breathing practices, and yoga exercises. The emphasis is not on asana, but rather on chanting and breathing.

- ***Mysore Style:*** Named after the city in India where Pattabhi Jois teaches the Ashtanga Vinyasa method: a self-led practice with supervision and physical adjustments by an instructor.

- ***Vijnana Yoga:*** A Hatha Yoga practice developed by Donna Holleman and Orit SenGupta, based on seven "vital principles" designed to use the body to explore the deeper layers of our being.

- ***Viniyoga:*** This gentle form of flow yoga places great emphasis on the breath and coordinating breath with movement. Viniyoga's flowing movement or Vinyasa is similar to Ashtanga's dynamic series of poses, but performed at a greatly reduced pace and stress level. Poses and flows are chosen to suit the student's abilities. It teaches the yoga student how to apply the tools of yoga: asana, chanting, pranayama (control of breath), and meditation, in individual practice. Developed by T.K.V. Desikachar, the son of Krishnamacharya (teacher to some of the great yoga instructors including Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois), Viniyoga places less stress on joints and knees as postures are done with slightly bent knees. Viniyoga is considered excellent for beginners, and is increasingly used in therapeutic environments.

- ***Yin Yoga:*** A term coined by Paul Grilley to describe a form of practice with an emphasis on long-held postures, usually seated, supine or prone. Yin Yoga's focus is on strengthening and lengthening connective tissue, which in turn, through meridian lines, have an effect on optimal organ function.

Seeing the Big Picture

In The Splendor of Recognition, Swami Shantananda describes his experience of looking at a fragment of a hologram. Within the structure of a hologram, there is a three-dimensional image. If that hologram is smashed into a thousand pieces, each piece will still contain the original image in its entirety, only smaller. This is the vision of a Tantric, non-dual philosophy. Each of us is a fragment of the big picture, namely, Consciousness.

Consciousness has, through its own choice to limit itself, created diversity, making many from the One. Through our eyes as humans, we often forget the big picture and we see only our separateness, like fragments of the hologram. The practice of yoga is the revelation of ourselves as individuals containing the big picture perfectly within each of us.

The various approaches of yoga are all paths to this inner destination. Depending on our nature, we may find an entry point into the practice through postures, meditation, selfless service, study, or the vibratory quality of sound. Whatever our entry point, the highest goal of yoga is a reunification with our true nature as both the individual piece of the puzzle and the whole picture.

Creating Intention

Before teaching, create an intention for your class. This intention should serve the student's highest good and reflect your own understandings in your practice and life. An intention can be specific, and have an effect physically, emotionally, and philosophically.

The Intention of "Releasing Tension"

Physically

Choose postures and an approach that lend themselves to this intention. An emphasis on smooth breath, stable foundation and approaching postures without aggression will reinforce your intention of releasing tension. Teaching difficult or unfamiliar postures would be contrary to the initial intention for this class.

Emotionally

Consider the emotional qualities that a release of tension engenders. Qualities such as surrender, openness, lack of fear, and resiliency are examples of emotionally embodying this intention.

Philosophically

The realm of thought is affected by the physical body and the state of the emotional body. All three bodies, in fact, exert and affect each other. Reflect upon what qualities of thought a release or lack of excessive tension promotes. These qualities might include curiosity, self- examination, seeing things with less initial judgment, and a less fearful and more open- hearted approach to others.

The art of embodying an intention when you teach

a class is the ability to weave your intention into the physical postures so that thought, emotion, and physicality resonate together and the practice becomes an experience of reconnection and revelation.

Self-evaluation

- How did your intention/theme for class work with the postures?
- How was:
  a) your timing?
  b) your voice?
  c) your general observation of the class?
  d) your movement around the room?
  e) your verbal adjustments?
- Describe your physical adjustments.
- Describe your demonstration. Was it simple and effective?
- How did you feel while teaching (elated, nervous, calm...)?

Light & Dark

"I see skies of blue and clouds of white, The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night. And I think to myself, what a wonderful world. The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky, Are also on the faces of people going by. I see friends shakin' hands, sayin' 'How do you do?' They're really sayin' 'I love you.'"
"What a Wonderful World"

Bob Thiele and George Weiss

When we look around, we see that almost everything consists of pairs of opposites. Heat and cold, joy and grief, hard and soft–the list goes on. This duality is an aspect of Shiva/Shakti—the singular force from which the entire universe is made manifest. When we contemplate a pair of opposites, as a little example of the way the whole universe works, it gives us insight into the principles that underlie creation.

In complete blackness, nothing can be seen. The dark obscures our vision, and our ability to comprehend reality totally. One would think that the remedy for this would be light. However, if in order to eradicate the blackness, we shine an all-encompassing light, something else very interesting happens. We find that without some darkness, nothing can be seen either.

Like walking from a dark room into a blazing summer day, we cannot see clearly. It is the subtle play of the dark and the light that creates contrast. Contrast, the relationship between two polarities, allows us to see clearly. What takes place is not a mere merging of light and dark—***that would create a uniform grey***—but an ever changing and dynamic relationship of opposites. We need both the dark and the light.

Exercise:

With a friend, write down three or four pairs of opposites. Explore their

relationship and outline a skillful use of these apparent opposites.

Polarities of Physical Energy

In asana practice, finding the outer form of the posture is what takes place first. This in itself is no small task. But if the practice were to stop there, it would never fulfill the goal of spreading the light of awareness throughout the body and re-connecting us with our essential nature. Sensitivity to the movement of prana within the physical and energetic body and the conscious direction of that energy is a hallmark of deeper practice.

The outer form of the posture must be present before deeper work in the asana can begin, just as a canvas needs to be prepared before the creative and transformative process of art can begin.

Opposing Forces

The human body is a microcosm of the universe. Gravitational forces, which draw matter together, are opposed by forces which extend back out such as light, heat, and the radiant energy of the sun. The universe is always seeking balance, and this is also a goal in asana practice: to seek balance through the use of opposing forces.

One force at work in the body is condensing energy. Condensing energy can be experienced as a drawing in

to the body's center, just as gravity on our planet draws everything towards its core. Connecting this "drawing in" with the in-breath is helpful, as the inhalation is in itself a "drawing in" of energy. Condensing energy is stabilizing and integrative.

Another force is condensing energy's opposite: reactive, expansive energy. Physically, there always exists a potential energy inherent in what is drawn in. The condensation of matter on our planet creates the potential for expansion, life, and growth. In the breath, the lungs fill with a deep inhalation. The exhalation is the counterpoint to the inhalation and must occur before another inhalation takes place.

The exhalation is a giving back of what was taken in. Examples of this balance of forces can be experienced everywhere:

Financially, there must be a deposit in a bank account before a withdrawal can be made. Food is eaten, which gives the body energy. Streams fill with rain and move toward the ocean, and are again replenished with rain from the sky.

These two forces are called "Muscular and Organic Energy" in Anusara Yoga. Other yoga systems such as the work of Donna Holleman and Orit Sen Gutpta refer to the two energies as "Rooting and Recoiling."

When an imbalance in this system of give and take occurs in the body, it will be experienced as a blockage of energy, discomfort or possibly injury. Within our practice we seek to achieve a dynamic balance of forces to stabilize and create dynamic expansion. Physically, this expansion is experienced as a stretching and opening of muscle, connective tissue, joints, and increased circulation.

Exercise:

In Trikonasana, establish the outer form of the posture from a lunge. Notice the breathing— inhale and exhale. Surrender to this pulse as it permeates the cells of the body. On an inhalation, condense energy into your core from the periphery of your body. On the exhalation, expand back out from your core, back to the periphery and out through the foundation of the posture. Participate consciously in this universal pulse of opposites. Notice any differences physically, emotionally, and in your thought process.

Mantras

Gayatri Mantra:

Om bhûr bhuva sva
Tát savitúr várenyam
Bhárgo devásya dhîmahi
Dhíyo yó na prachodáyât

Word-for-word translation:
om 'the sacred sound'

Phonetic Pronunciation:
Om burr buva-ha sva-ha
Tat sa-vi-tour vara-en ya-hum
Bar-go de vas-ya de my-hee
De yo-yo na pra-show-da-yat

Mantra is an invocation of sacred sounds, and as such is yet another form of vibration in the form of organized sound. Repeating a mantra is a form of yoga in itself and is the primary practice in Mantra Yoga. Vibration affects matter. Even a musical instrument, if made of living material such as wood, will absorb the vibrations resonating through it. If the instrument is kept in tune and played regularly, the instrument's tone deepens, becomes more beautiful and able to carry the musician's song fully and accurately. The human body in the case of mantra repetition, is the instrument, which plays the song of the Divine.

The Gayatri Mantra is first recorded in the Rig Veda, written in Sanskrit about 2,500 to 3,500 years ago, and, according to some sources, may have been chanted for many generations before that.

Bhû 'earth' bhuvas 'atmosphere' svar 'light, heaven, space' tat 'that' savitúr 'of Savitr the god' (genitives of savitr-, 'stimulator'),'rouser'; name of a sun-deity and deva —'god' or 'demi-god' varenyam 'fit to be worshipped' varenya— 'desirable, excellent' bhargo 'glory effulgence' (radiance, luster, splendor, glory) devasya 'of God' dhîmahi 'may we attain' dhíya na 'our prayers' yá prachodáyât 'who may stimulate'

Literal translation:
"I invoke the Earth Plane, the Astral Plane, the Celestial Plane, the Plane of Spiritual Balance, the Plane of Human Spiritual Knowledge, the Plane of Spiritual Austerities, and the Plane of Ultimate Truth. Oh, great Spiritual Light, which is the brilliance of all Divinity, we meditate upon you. Please illumine our minds."

Methodology

Teaching methodology

Learning to Instruct

Before talking about yoga philosophy within a class or even teaching a pose, you must be able to direct a student's movement with clarity and a minimum of words.

Exercise:

Pick an everyday activity like opening a door, taking off a shoe, or scratching your leg. Write a script for that action so that it can be carried out without interpretation. An example of an instruction with a lack of clarity would be:

"Walk up and grab the door handle and open the door."

This instruction would work, but only because the person you are instructing has opened many doors before and knows how. A better instruction would be:

"Standing one arm's length away from the door, step your left foot forward and grasp the handle of the door in your right hand. Turn the handle clockwise until it stops, then bearing more weight in your right foot, smoothly pull the handle toward you, opening the door."

Teach a friend using different everyday objects and movements, making sure your friend does not interpret your instruction, but does exactly what you have instructed. The experience may illustrate just how difficult it can be to be both clear and strident with your words.

Adding Content

Begin simply. Simple is clear. Clear is good. Practice your teaching by simply instructing the breath through your own performance of Sun Salutations, one breath per movement. From there, layer on instruction so that the fundamentals of your teaching are so well established you will have the freedom to be creative.

Level 1
Breath

As you verbally instruct the breath in your own practice, listen to the tone of your voice. Notice the timing and pace of the simple instruction to inhale, exhale.

Create a steady flow in your body and your words. Speak the word "inhale" just slightly before you initiate the first movement into Urdhva Hastasana, and "exhale" just before the second movement into Uttanasana. Notice your own tendencies to shorten the breath.

When you feel comfortable instructing your own breath, visualize the sequence of movements of Surya Namaskara instead of actually performing them, and instruct the breath audibly. When you are comfortable with that level of instruction, walk around a room and instruct the breath, keeping a steady pace of visualized movement by noticing your own inhalation and exhalation. Embody the teaching of the breath so completely in this way that if you "freeze-framed" any part of the Sun Salutation you would know which part of the breath, inhalation or exhalation, connects with it.

Level 2
Outer Body Movement

Next is teaching outer body movement. Duration within a posture is dependent upon the style of class you are teaching (such as upbeat, restorative, meditative, and so on). As a starting point, time your own number of breaths over one minute, using your breathing to mark duration. Teach postures at 45 seconds per side for a medium paced class, one minute for a slightly slower paced class.

You will need to write a script to instruct entrance into a posture. Starting your entrance to most standing postures from a lunge gives you a "home base" reference point. Here is an example of a bare-bones outer body instruction for Parsvakonasana (side angle posture) entered from a lunge:

"From your lunge (performed with the right foot forward, left foot back) turn your back foot 90 degrees and press all four corners of the foot to the earth. Place your right forearm on your right thigh and your left hand on your hip. Turn your torso to the left."

This is a very basic instruction, free of unnecessary words. This instruction takes about fifteen seconds, allowing time for students to perform each part of the instruction. Once they have taken the basic form, the duration is five breaths or approximately one minute. The posture is repeated again on the other side for the same duration. Write a basic outer body script for all the standing postures you will be teaching and practice speaking them as you perform the asana, using your own body movements as a cue for timing. Speak first, then move.

When you feel comfortable at this level, instructing your own body, try standing still as if you were teaching a class from the front of the room and speak through one standing posture at a time. Then time yourself, eliminating anything unclear or unnecessary.

Level 3
Physical Alignment/Energy Movement

Building upon the breath and the basic form of the posture, aligning the body optimally is next. Basic outer body alignment (length of stance, body position) should already be taken care of in your outer body movement instruction. Now you can begin to describe the movement of prana, connected to the inhalation and exhalation to align the student with the pulse of nature. Connect the inhalation to condensing energy, the exhalation to expansive energy. Here is an example, building upon the previous instruction for Parsvakonasana:

"From your lunge (performed with the right foot forward, left foot back) turn your back foot 90 degrees and press all four corners of the foot to the earth. Inhale as you draw energy from the earth into your center. Place your right forearm on your right thigh and your left hand on your hip. Turn your torso to the left. On your next exhalation, send that energy back through the legs into the earth."

This enhanced instruction now takes about twenty-five seconds to verbalize.

At this point, you are beginning to introduce philosophical intention. By simply describing the flow of energy, the student's attention is drawn to this universal pulsation of opposites. Depending on the student, this physical embodiment may be an "Ah, Ha!" moment, or it may not resonate at all. Keep teaching. Practice this with all the standing postures again, as you perform them, and then standing still.

Level 4
Embodying Intention

Here, your teaching throughout the class should refer to your initial class intention introduced briefly at the beginning of class. You could use a poem, or share a personal experience, recite a yoga sutra or utilize any other inspiring material to introduce an intention. Whatever it is, weave the intention through the postural instructions in your class. Because what we experience physically in asana practice is also related to the greater pulsation of life, the essence of the teachings become self-evident, leading to a deepening of wisdom within the student. Skillful and creative teaching in this way elevates the asana practice from a physical workout to its potential as an experience that reveals our wholeness. Here is an example, again building on the previous instructions. The intention for this class, reflected in the postural instructions, is "non-attachment."

"From your lunge, turn your back foot 90 degrees and press all four corners of the foot to the earth, reconnecting with it. Inhale as you draw energy from the earth into your center, knowing that what is taken must again be given back. Place your right forearm on your right thigh and your left hand on your hip. Turn your torso to the left and with gratitude, expand fully on the inhalation. On your next

exhalation, send that energy back through the legs into the earth, and allow this pulse of energy to move through you like a river, its flow keeping it clear, without stagnation."

This level of instruction can be very inspiring if it comes naturally from a place of true embodiment in the teacher. You must decide what level of instruction with which you are comfortable. Make sure you have the fundamentals of instruction absolutely solid before moving on. There is no point in attempting to transmit subtle aspects of our true nature when half the class is in another posture. Your intention will work more effectively if it is an intention that can be embodied. The above example works in asana practice because releasing the breath is clearly a physical form of non-attachment. You may have a great class intention that is difficult to embody. An intention such as "study of scripture to increase wisdom" is a great thing to dedicate one's efforts towards, but it is difficult to weave that kind of intention into the body during asana practice.

Instructing Specific Postures

Being an effective yoga teacher is like being a good waiter. You direct the students to take their seat, describe to them what is on the menu, possibly modifying a dish or two to better serve them, and occasionally check back to see how things are going.

Each course of the meal needs to be brought out and presented, and then the waiter allows the guests to enjoy.

Using effective and clear language, the students you are teaching must be instructed in and out of the basic form of every posture you teach. Advanced students may be familiar with the names of many postures, but beginners will require instruction as to how to approximate every posture. These basic instructions are essential before refinements of alignment are taught. To do this, you will need to write a script for every posture you intend to teach—the full syllabus at the end of this book is a good place to start.

This work is made a little easier as many postures share similarities. Stance width for many standing postures is the same. Many seated postures also share similarities in their general form. The artistry of teaching once the basic form of a posture is approximated by your students is to then creatively illustrate the differences between the postures.

Some examples of possible scripts:

Surya Namaskara (Sun Salutation)

- Inhale and raise your arms, exhale and fold forward, touching the floor.
  Inhale and look forward.
- Exhale, step back and lower down to a low plank, called Chataronga Dandasana.
  Inhale, sweep your body forward and up into Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (upward dog).
- Exhale and move back into an upside-down V, or Adho Mukha Svanasana.
- Hold this posture for five breaths, feel the connection to the earth through your fingers.

- Bend the knees a little, stretch back from the hands and elongate the spine.
- On your 6th inhale, step up and gaze forward.
- Exhale and fold forward again.
- Inhale back up to standing, raising your arms to the sky.
- Exhale to equal standing.

Due to the speed of Surya Namaskara, moving at one posture per breath, it is not possible to instruct much more that the basics of entry into each posture. Surya Namaskara is an excellent place to begin instructing postures precisely because of this.

Exercise:

Write a script for Surya Namaskara in your own words. Your own use of grammar, colloquial language and choice of words is like a signature.

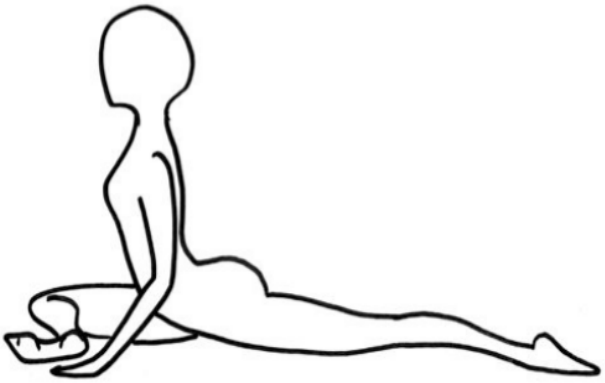
Your natural way of interpreting the practice is uniquely your own. Make your teaching your own, not a copy of anyone else's. At the same time, keep the number of words to a minimum while still giving clear instruction.

Example scripts continued...

Parsvakonasana

"From down dog, please step your right foot forward between your hands. Placing your right forearm on your knee, turn your torso to the left as you turn your back foot 90 degrees toward the front of your mat. Keeping your back foot strong, track your right knee directly over your ankle. Reach your left arm 45 degrees up to the ceiling, palm facing down. Breathe fully, keeping the eyes soft. Remain here for five breaths.

On your next inhale, place both palms on the mat, exhale and step back to downward dog.



Rajakapotasana

"From down dog, sweep your right foot forward, crossing it over the front of the mat so your right knee is wider out than your hip, and the outer shin and ankle lie on the mat. Keep your left leg engaged while you lay the toenails of that foot on the mat, stretching back. Fingers or palms under your shoulders, inhale and draw the spine long, keeping your foundation strong in both legs. Exhale and curl back, taking to the top of your throat back. Continue firming the legs and fill the back ribs with breath. After five breaths, place the palms down firmly and push back to down dog."

Janu Sirsasana

"From Dandasana, bring your left leg in and place the sole of your foot against your right thigh. Keep the fingers on the ground beside you and firm the muscles of your legs. From this foundation, extend your spine up and tip your pelvis forward. Take your leg, ankle or foot with your right hand. Inhale and square your shoulders, exhale and fold forward into the posture. Every inhale, extend your spine. Every exhale, surrender more deeply into Janu Sirsasana. Take five long breaths here. Keep your straight leg firming toward the floor and on your next inhale, rise back up from the forward fold and place the legs in Dandasana again."

Savasana

"Now the effort of the asana practice is over. Lie down on your mat, allowing your palms to open and the legs and feet to relax. Take one more long inhale through the nose and sigh out through your mouth. Allow the eyes to rest back into the sockets as you bring the lids of the eyes over them. Using your connection to the ground through your left fingers, feel the connection between your body and the floor and sink deeper into the experience of surrender."

Every word you use should be specific and not easily misinterpreted. Remember, your students will be exerting themselves physically, undergoing some discomfort and trying to hear your voice above their own internal dialogue. Use direct, active language to instruct the basic form of postures.

These examples are simple and direct, and constitute the "nuts and bolts" of instructing postures. Your own energy, words, and intention for the class you are teaching will blossom from a clear foundation of basic instruction, and allow you to truly bring your own voice to your teaching.

Becoming adept at basic instruction will also allow you to fully relax as you teach. This tangible ease and confidence will encourage your students to relax and also accept the teachings more completely. When you are skilled at instructing simply, then you can begin also to teach to what you observe, adding appropriate verbal and physical adjustments when necessary.

Exercise:

Write a script for five standing and five seated postures. Instruct the entrance into standing postures from down dog. Instruct the seated postures from Dandasana. Be as brief as possible for now, remembering the student needs to find the posture and then spend five long breaths experiencing it.

After writing your script, read it aloud in a natural voice and see if it sounds like something you would say. Avoid unfamiliar anatomical descriptions or jargon the general population would not understand.

Teaching to What You Observe

Now that you have the tools to teach at a level of subtlety that is appropriate for you, you must actually teach to the class you are leading.

Observe the following:

- The foundation of the posture (usually feet) for alignment and connection;
- The quality of breath—listen to the rate, the ease, the depth; and The basic form of the posture—placement, alignment, energy flow.

Be ready to adjust your class depending on what you see. If the sequence you are teaching is clearly too difficult or physically demanding for the majority of the class, adjust accordingly without letting them off the hook completely.

Verbal adjustments

After observing, you can give adjustments to postures verbally. Remember that every student is different, from the structure of the bones to their ability. Not every posture is appropriate for every student, and no two students will look the same in a posture. There is no 'perfect' posture in terms of what it looks like on the outside. Perfect posture is one that is balanced in its action, with the full light of awareness of the practitioner illuminating the body, and results in an expression of creativity and joy. There are ways to create more opening, a deeper flow of prana and safety for the joints in a posture. When you observe a student and have determined that their posture could be adjusted to reveal more awareness, or to align them to practice more safely, you make a choice to verbalize this.

To the group

If, after determining the place that offers the best sight lines, you observe the entire class from this optimal position in the room and notice a general misalignment, energy flow or body positioning that could be changed to deepen the experience of practice, address the whole room in a manner reflective of your intention to uplift and support their efforts. Be concise. Use direct wording. An example of indirect, wishywashy wording would be:

"Okay...ummm hmmm... I see that maybe, if you feel like it today, and it's appropriate for you, and you feel like listening to me, that possibly everyone could maybe push their right foot onto their left thigh just a bit harder, again (laughs nervously) ... or not."

This kind of direction is simply irritating. This teacher is wasting the students' valuable time in an effort to avoid offending anyone. The reason the

students are in your class is to take direction from a qualified teacher. Offer this direction to them directly, with a minimum of chatter, and in a way that supports their efforts and is not demeaning:

"Everyone, please push your left foot to your right thigh more deeply."

To an individual

When verbally instructing an individual student to make an adjustment, you could lower the volume of your voice to speak only to that person, again remembering you have a class to teach and limited time. Do not engage in a conversation with the student. Simply direct their attention to what it is you would like them to adjust, and ask them to do it. Use their name if you know it. If you do not know their name, now is a good time to ask:

"Hi—what's your name? O.K.,—Deb,—move your hands back two inches—that's great."

Not:

"Hi, hey, your practice is looking great. How long have you been practicing? I'm noticing something going on here in your hands, and I'm wondering if you know about it? You don't? Oh, well let me sit down here and tell you some stuff."

And so on. Deb has now been in down dog for two minutes and the rest of the class is bored and beginning to chat amongst themselves. Remember the big picture, be concise, and let the students know that you are available to answer questions before or after class.

Physical adjustments

Through observation, you may determine that a student would benefit from a physical adjustment. Before adjusting physically, you need to know if it's o.k. to touch a particular student. If you have the opportunity to do a new student intake, you can ask them at that time. If you are substitute teaching an ongoing class, you can ask

the students before class begins to come up and let you know about any injuries or if they would not like to be physically adjusted.

Forms of contact

When you adjust, your touch should be reassuringly firm, not feathery or indistinct. Until you have experience with a particular student, keep the intensity of the adjustment on the low side of a scale of 1-10. There are times when a deep adjustment is therapeutic, but there is also higher risk of injury.

Touch can be used to direct a student's attention to a specific area of the body, to manually assist in movement, to re-assure (as in a friendly touch) or to assist relaxation, as in adjustments for Savasana (corpse posture). Be aware of zones of the body that are "high voltage." Never use touch in a sensual or sexual manner.

Keep your attention on the highest purpose of teaching yoga, which is to assist in the re-connection with the Divine.

Timing a Class

Most yoga classes are between 1 –1.5 hours, generally 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Your class should consist of:

- Greeting and centering/taking a seat
- Introducing intention
- Basic warm-up
- Standing postures
- Seated postures
- Meditation
- Savasana
- Closing

You need to distribute that time between these categories. Using the basic template for self- practice outlined in "Sequencing Fundamentals," we can establish the amount of time that a class would take. Keep in mind:

✔ Duration per posture can be anywhere between 30 seconds to 1 minute per posture. Postures that have a left and right side would then take 60 seconds to 2 minutes to teach. You can use a watch to time your breath over 1 minute, then use your breath to pace the class.

✔Your greeting and introducing intention should be somewhere between 2-5 minutes.

✔Basic warm-ups can include seated shoulder and hip opening, breath work, Sun Salutation, or another repetitive movement designed to get the

students "into" their bodies, before detailed postural instruction begins (5-10 minutes).

✔Standing postures could take about half the remainder of the time allotted for asana, seated postures the next half, leaving time for meditation and relaxation.

✔Savasana (relaxation) should be between 5- 10 minutes.

✔Closing can include a final prayer, thanking the students for their attention, tea, and answering questions.

Greeting/Centering

- Seated posture (legs crossed, half or full lotus)
- Introduce intention. Begin Ujjai breath. (5 min)

Sequence

- Supta Padangustasana (hands behind thigh) (2 min)
- Adho Mukha Svanasana (down dog) (1 min)
- Lunge (fingers on floor) (2 min)
- Surya Namaskara (modified) x3 (6 min)
- Surya Namaskara (full) x2 (5 min)
- Trikonasana (triangle pose) (2 min)
- Parsvakonasana (side angle) (2 min)
- Parsvottanasana (2 min)
- Prasarita Padottanasana (wide leg standing forward bend), A and C (2 min)
- Utthita Hasta Padangustasana (hand-to-big-toe balance) (2 min)
- Rajakapotasana (king pigeon posture) (3 min)
- Bakasana (crow) (2 min)
- Balasana (child's pose) (2 min)
- Navasana (boat) x3 (3 min)
- Virasana (hero) (1 min)
- Supta Virasana (supine hero) (1 min)
- Ustransana (camel) (1 min)
- Urdhva Dhanurasana (full wheel) (2 min)
- Marichyasana C (twist) (2 min)
- Dandasana (staff posture) (1 min)
- Upavistha Konasana (wide leg forward bend) (1min)
- Janu Sirsasana (one leg forward bend) (1 min)
- Pranayama/meditation (4 min)
- Savasana (10 min)

The above sequence is timed at 65 minutes. Allowing for some demonstration and collecting the class into a group before entering another posture, the total class time should be roughly 75 minutes. This would be a class paced fairly briskly.

Exercise:

Using the basic template for class planning (see "Sequencing Fundamentals"), write your own sequence of postures and time them depending on your intention to create an upbeat, more restorative, or meditative class. Restorative postures including supine and supported postures take longer to set up and the duration is usually longer as well (2-10 minutes). Therefore, there would be fewer postures over the same class time.

Partner Work

Pairing up students can be fun and informative, lightening the mood of class, and is an opportunity to create community. Students need to understand what the purpose of the partner work is, and how to do it safely. Some people will not be interested in partner work for their own reasons, which could include injury, illness, disinterest in communicating at the end of a long day, or many other reasons. Be judicious in your use of partner work.

Before pairing students for partner work, demonstrate clearly what you want them to do, using a student to aid with the demonstration. Ask the student you worked with whether the work was effective in its purpose. Before the partner work begins, ask the class if they have any questions. Make sure everyone has a partner, and if not, partner with the unpaired student.

Themeing

"Each class has a heart-oriented theme, which has a meaningful connection to the grand spiritual purposes of the asana practice. The theme usually centers on cultivating a virtue—a quality of mind or heart, which is a microcosmic reflection of our Divine nature. Each theme gives a direction for the attitudinal energy that infuses every action and breath in the poses. Effectively, all the poses in Anusara Yoga are expressed from the 'inside out.' The theme is intertwined with the postural instructions throughout the class."

John Friend

An example of a theme would be "Playfulness":

"Playfulness is seen in those who approach life with a light, fearless attitude.

This attitude stems from an underlying understanding that we are, at a fundamental level, perfectly o.k. We may like or dislike certain qualities that we possess, but the practice of yoga allows us to see beneath them to our true nature. Today when we practice, have fun with the postures–allow your innate creative nature to percolate through the practice."

Playful is a combination word including play and full. There is an expansive feeling when we let go and allow ourselves a little silliness. Many themes may contain a polarity–seeming opposites, like effort and surrender, Stability and freedom– one which yields to the other and they actually work together.

Themeing a Specific Posture

If you decide to apply a theme to your class, it will be much more effective if you can refer to it within the context of the postures, not just at the beginning and end of your class. For example:

Bakasana:

"From downward dog, bend your knees and spring lightly toward your bent arms, pretending you will land on them with you knees. See this happening in your mind's eye first. Release any ideas of impossibility!

This is a simple theme, really just one word. In order to keep things interesting for the students it is a good idea to write down some synonyms that describe your theme:Playfulness: lightness; expansiveness; with no fear; with wonder; with a smile; unrestrained.

Most effective themes will describe qualities of the heart and or mind: courage, steadfastness, determination, compassion–there are many others.

If you have a personal story that relates to your theme, this will resonate with your students more strongly than just referring to a vague virtue or emotion that does not resonate with you.

There are many ways to begin brainstorming for themes–all you have to do is think about an experience you have had and how you related to it, then discover the virtue or quality of heart that was necessary to skillfully negotiate that circumstance.

Make it personal, and then make it relate to your student's experience. For example:

"I just came back from teaching a workshop in Tofino. When I arrived the night before, I was exhausted and had to drag myself to my host Natalie's regular class. I really didn't feel like teaching the next morning, but in talking with Natalie after her class and seeing her incredible enthusiasm for the workshop the next day and all the work she had done to prepare, something in me changed. I realized that my own fatigue could wait until I got home, and the student's collective experience was more important. The resiliency I felt carried me through, and we had a great workshop.

When I got home I slept for 12 hours.

Today, when you practice, tap into the deep reserves of stamina and power you have. This time we have together is pretty short. Let's make this practice vibrate with energy, and at the end take a very deep Savasana."

Then, when teaching a pose, relate the virtue you spoke of–in this case resiliency–and weave it into the postural instructions. Choose poses that work well with your theme; for example, include lots of standing poses held a little longer than normal:

"From Tadasana, jump to the side of your mat, feet spread wide for Prasarita Padottanasana–wide leg forward bend. Take a deep inhale and feel the pulsation of power in your breath as you soften your skin. Inhale and draw in power through your feet into the core of your body. Clasp your hands behind your back as you bend your knees slightly. Knees bent, move the top of your thighs back as you fold forward. On your next exhale, draw down your tailbone and send that reservoir of energy back through your legs and arms. With determination, extend a little further."

If you are having a tough time coming up with a theme, you could reflect on:

- The hardest thing you've ever done.
- The most fun you've ever had.
- An experience that has touched you deeply.
- A time when you could have acted better, and which quality was missing at the time.

Write a sentence or two about each one of those e periences, then find the central virtue or emotion. For example, in the statement, "The hardest thing

I've ever done was telling my younger brother, who was 11 at the time, that our father had died," the central feeling or virtue necessary was compassionate stability.

Take some time to write out a theme for a class, share it with your group and give each other feedback. Your class theme should connect your own experience to the collective experience of the group, illustrate a concept that can be embodied physically, and be simple and memorable.

Classroom Organization

In order to teach effectively and to give verbal and physical adjustments, the teacher needs to see the students. Although this sounds obvious, observation is one of the hardest parts of teaching Yoga. It may be quite easy to observe an individual student and give encouragement and supportive clarification of your instructions. It can be much harder when teaching a class of twenty to thirty students. Thankfully, there are techniques that can make the job a little easier.

Sight Lines

In order to scan quickly around the room to check for general form of the posture you have instructed, placement of feet and/or hands, and to see that the posture is being performed on the side (right or left) you have directed, do the following:

- Have the students line up their mats perpendicular to the longest wall in the room.
- If you have a large class, arrange another row in front of the first.
- Repeat as necessary.
- Arrange the second row so the mats are staggered in front of the first row, like movie theatre seats.

This will allow you to make eye contact with each row from the front of the room, where you will be beginning the class. Your ability to see a group of students easily will allow you to make efficient verbal adjustments to the group or to an individual within the group based on your observation.

Eye contact–the ability of the students to also see you comfortably–will allow you to communicate and inspire them through facial expressions. Seeing the students faces, you can also determine their state of mind more easily and note signs of discomfort and skin color.

When beginning the class, you will teach from the front of the room, where your mat is placed. For postures oriented facing forward like Tree posture, Equal Standing, and Chair posture, teach from the front of the room. When teaching postures that are oriented to the left and right, like Triangle, Side Angle, and Warrior

Two, move to the side of the room the students are facing. From here, you can maintain better eye contact and communication. Use this approach for both standing and seated postures. Postures that are oriented facing backwards like downward dog and standing forward fold are challenging, if not impossible, to maintain eye contact in. These postures can be used as an opportunity to give more physical adjustments.

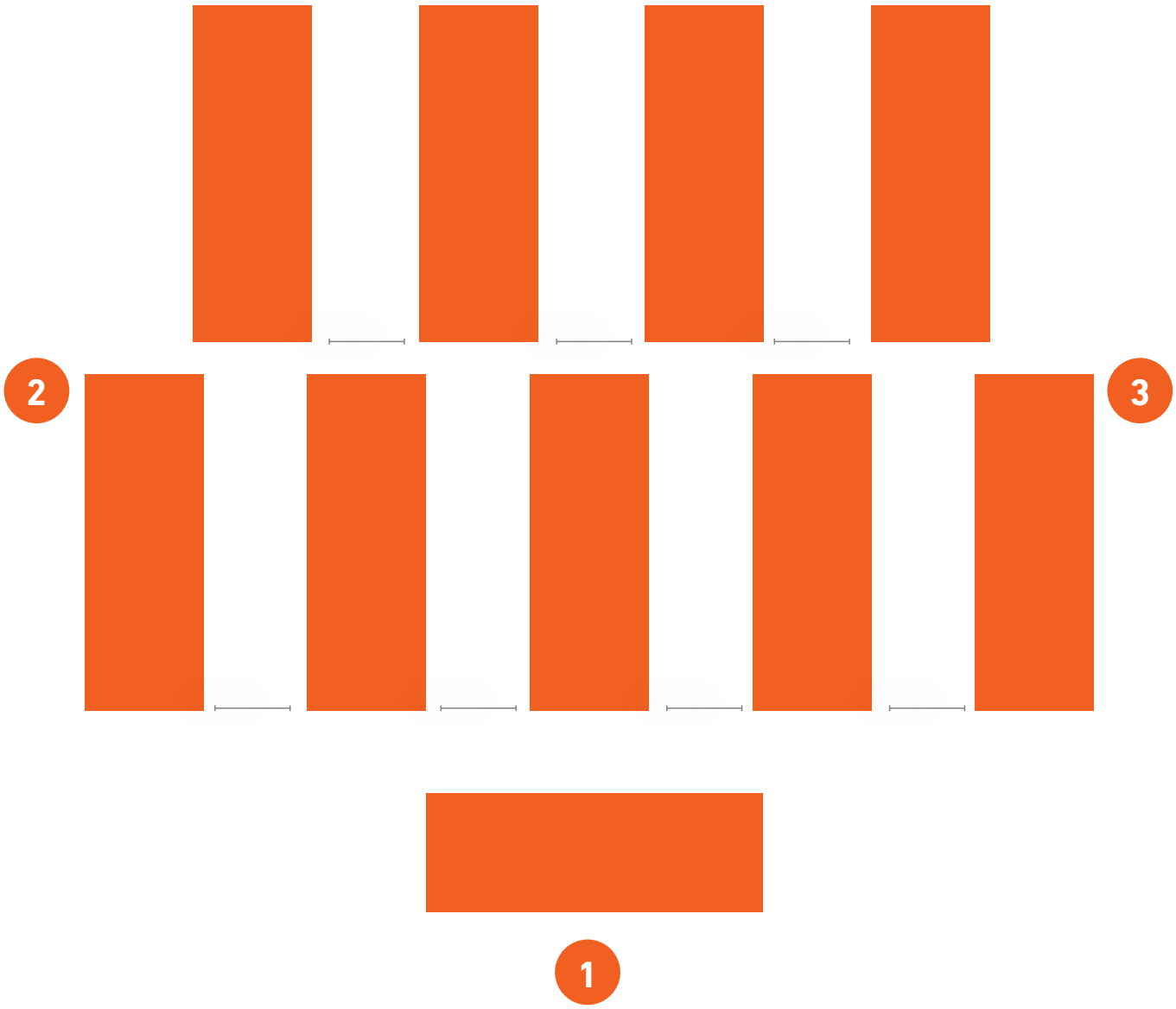
When the students are supine (lying on their backs) it is easiest to move through the group slowly to create better eye contact, using observation, verbal and physical adjustments.

Regardless of the size of the room, keep the students no more than one mat width apart from each other. Students have a tendency to spread out, making it difficult for the teacher in terms of making observations and adjustments. Keeping students closer to one another will encourage more attention and energy from the class, and allow you to moderate your voice without having to project in more than one direction. Make sure you have enough room to move between the mats to make physical adjustments, if necessary.

Class Layout

Students set up mats to face the instructor's mat in this class layout example. There should be enough room for the instructor to move around the group, observe the class as a whole as well as having the ability to provide individual adjustments.

1) Beginning of class; postures oriented facing forward, i.e. – Tree, Equal Standing, Chair.
2) Left foot forward, i.e. – Triangle, Side Angle, Warrior Two.
3) Right foot forward, i.e. – Triangle, Side Angle, Warrior Two.



Offering Props

Decide beforehand in your class planning if you wish to perform postures that may require props. If so, set up a template, or example, of the props required for the class beside your own mat at the front of the room. When you greet students as they come in, indicate what props will be required. If you are teaching a course of classes, take the time at the beginning of one class to explain the use of props and get the students to see whether or not they could benefit from using a block or strap in their practice.

- Straps can extend the reach of a student, making it possible to use upper body strength to move more deeply into a forward bend. In this case, the strap is passed around the feet and grasped at either end. In such a manner, the spine can remain extended instead of overly curved.
- Blocks can be used to help tilt the pelvis forward into a neutral position for seated postures. Such devices can also be used to support the spine in a supine backbend.

There are a variety of uses for props. Although they are helpful, their use can also slow the class down considerably. If you are teaching a flow class, choose postures where the need for props is minimal.

Demonstration

Use demonstrations wisely. Demonstrating a posture or an approach can be very instructive, because a student cannot see the form of their own posture. Viewing the posture from another perspective is very helpful and can often explain what words alone cannot.

Nevertheless, demonstrations have the effect of breaking the continuity of flow within a class and altering the direction of concentration for the student. When you decide to use a demonstration, make sure it counts by doing the following:

Make sure every student can see and hear you. Ask them to gather near you.

- Be concise as you explain the approach you want them to employ, or the focus of the posture you are demonstrating. Stay with one or two main points.
- If you are using a student to demonstrate on, quietly ask their permission first.
- When you have finished the demonstration, thank the students for their attention, and the student you have demonstrated on.
- Have the students go back to their mats and perform the same pose again, employing what was highlighted in the demonstration.

Silent Demonstration

It is an interesting and powerful phenomenon that the part of the brain used to control a given part of the body will also respond to a visual cue—if it is demonstrated in silence. Bypassing the language center of the brain can result in a deeper kinesthetic understanding.

To perform a silent demonstration, do the following:

- Tell your class you will be demonstrating in silence, and tell them why.
- Ask them also to be silent.
- Move into the posture you are demonstrating with the breath.
- Point to the part of the body that is the focus of your demonstration and perform the approach you are highlighting.
- Move out of the posture before you begin speaking again.

Language

The human voice communicates many things: tone of voice, number of words, rapidity of speech, volume of voice, and, of course, content. In teaching yoga, the instructor uses all these things to communicate with the students, affecting brain, body, and heart. Tone of Voice Possibly the most important, tone of voice sets the mood for the class. Modulate your voice so it does not remain monotone. If you are excited about something, communicate your enthusiasm with your voice. If you are not genuinely excited about something, do not contrive to be. Such a pretension will become quite apparent to others. In an upbeat class, draw on the energy created by the asana practice to enliven your voice so as to encourage the class. In a more restorative class or slow-paced class, your voice and pacing should fit the intention of a more relaxed pace.

How Much to Say?

The more we learn as teachers, the more knowledge we want to transmit to others. Ultimately, great teaching

is about facilitating a connection with your student's own inner wisdom. For beginner students, keep your instruction simple and empow ering. Do not be afraid to repeat the same instruction more than once. Instruct one or two main points in a pose, relating it occasionally to your main teaching intention for that class. When referring to a body part or position, it is helpful to name it in more than one way. For example: "From the lunge, turn your back foot–your left foot–out 90 degrees. Place your right fingertips under your right shoulder and rotate your torso to the left."

Be Concise

A great author once said in a letter to his friend, "I wrote you a long letter because I did not have time to write a short one." It is challenging to be concise in your speech. Your student's undivided attention is a precious thing. Honor their focus by saying only what is necessary in your class as you teach. Create some occasional silence to allow them to reflect and embody the instructions.

Volume/Content

Stand in the room you will be teaching in when it is empty. Speak in a natural voice for yourself, no different than if you were talking to a friend at the other end of the room. You can practice by reading aloud, or rehearse teaching a posture. Your voice should comfortably fill the room without shouting. When you teach you will be moving around the room, not standing on your mat, so practice this as well. Get an audio recorder, place it at a corner of the room and practice teaching for 10 minutes.

Listen to the recording and see if it is understandable and loud enough to hear comfortably. Listen for often repeated words like "O.K.," "Nice," "Good." Record again, and eliminate any unnecessary words.

Now that you have listened to your speaking style, keep it natural. Continue to refine

how you say what you say so it is as easy to listen to as possible. Now you can begin work on the content of what you are saying.

Posture Modification

When teaching a posture, consider its appropriateness for the particular class.

Keep in mind that, due to bone structure differences, some students will be able to approximate an advanced posture with little or no experience, but others may never be able to perform it, given the proportion and structure of their arms, legs, and torso. In your class planning, using the template of posture categories, include fundamental postures first before adding complex postures requiring binding of the hands around legs or extremely deep forward or back bends. Ultimately, the student should leave your class feeling empowered. The asana practice is not a gymnastic competition.

When teaching a mixed-level class, highlight postures that could be modified up or down in difficulty, such as giving the option of Balasana (child's pose) as an alternative to down dog. Watch for full breath and optimal alignment rather than encouraging potentially injurious activity. Every student should be encouraged to approach their limitations mindfully.

In postures where the arms are bound around the legs, as in Marichyasana-C, simply instruct the pose without the hands bound as an alternative. Straps can be used to make seated forward bends accessible to tighter students.

When you instruct a class and give modifications, remember that a modification is meant to facilitate a deeper experience of yoga for those who choose it. To reflect a deeper experience, be mindful of the language you use.

Poor language:

"O.K., everyone should grab their toes in this seated forward bend... and if you can't do that, then put your hands on your legs, and if you can't even do that, then just sit up straight with a long spine..."

Better language:

"Take a seat with legs stretched out in front. Breathe

deeply and extend your spine.

Keeping your spine long, stretch the back body by reaching the crown of your head forward. If you like, take the toes."

You are instructing the same posture, but the emphasis has switched from outer body position to the breath and the anatomical benefits of doing the posture.

Observation: Individual Student

Foundation

After scanning the room to notice that the basic form of the posture you are teaching has been approximated by the students, turn your attention to the foundation of the postures. Without a foundation that is stable and well-aligned, there is no point in giving instructions to align the rest of the body. Optimal expansion and extension cannot occur within the rest of the body from an unsteady foundation.

Distance between the student's feet in standing postures may vary somewhat depending on width of hips, length of legs and height of the student. Stance width can also be modified depending on the focus of the posture. A wider stance often offers more freedom of movement but less stability. The teacher's goal is to educate the student so they attain an optimal foundation for their body. Once a student knows their best width and length of a stance, you can turn your attention to the orientation of the feet.

Orientation of the feet:

In most traditional standing postures (Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana, Parsvottanasana, and the revolved versions), the front foot (the foot closest to the front of the mat) is positioned parallel to the side edges of the mat. The rear foot (the foot closest to the back edge of the mat) is turned out 45-90 degrees, depending on the posture. The student's abilities and bone structure play a role in determining an optimal angle and stance length.

Connection of the feet:

All four corners of the foot remain connected to the earth. Balanced action (the conscious engagement of muscle, condensing energy inward, and the reciprocal expansive force back to the earth) will create the ability to stretch out from the firmness of the feet, affecting the entire body.

Look for muscular activity in the legs of a student. If they are wearing shorts, that helps. If not, you can ask the class to roll up their yoga pants a bit so the ankles and shins are visible. Watch for aligned ankles that do not collapse inward or outward in Adho Mukha Svanasana (down dog). The four corners of the feet remain active even if all four corners are not physically connected to the earth i.e. the back foot in a lunge.

Knees:

The knees track directly over the ankles when the knee or knees are bent.

This is crucial for the health of the knee.

General Mood

Watch for circulation in the skin, general expression, and eyes which should be alert but not bulging. Listen for smooth, deep breath. Ask how an individual stu dent is doing if you are in doubt, but do not engage in long conversation and lose connection with the class.

Observe closely before giving specific verbal or physical adjustments. Observe the posture from the foundation up. Adjust the core of the posture (torso, hips, shoulders) before the periphery (fingers, arms, head). Start the adjustment by addressing the student by their first name: "Sally, firm the muscles in your legs and sink deeper into your right knee. Good."

The Role of the Teacher

As a teacher, you occupy a sacred place. What you say and do will have an effect on every student in your class. Remember that you are there to serve the students. Cultivate personal integrity, honesty, humor, humility, and compassion in your life and in your class. Be ready to answer questions before or after class. Show up for your class early and prepare properly. Greet your students when they arrive and refer to them by name. Honor the unique qualities of every student as a manifestation of the Supreme. If you make a mistake in your teaching, for example, referring to a posture by the wrong name, mixing up left and right, go ahead and laugh with them about it. Ultimately, although you will be doing all the talking, it is not about you.

Honor your teachers and commit to your role as a lifelong student, as well as a teacher of yoga. Treat all students with the same integrity and respect, following the ethical guidelines of the Yamas and Niyamas.

Remain committed to your personal yoga practice. Devotion will develop your teaching to a degree no amount of external training or workshops can. When possible, share your practice with friends and teachers and share your knowledge and joy for the practice. As time goes on, your practice will evolve and change. Some things will no longer feel appropriate as you become attracted to other aspects of practice.

Notice this natural evolution and apply it to your teaching.

Sequencing Fundamentals

The sequence of postures you incorporate into your asana practice should relate to your initial intention for your practice or class. For example, doing a high-intensity, back- bending practice is not a great way to embody the intention of restoring energy to a tired body. A sequence of restorative postures, gentle twists, and hip openers would be more appropriate. First create an intention for your practice or class, then decide which asana will help achieve that intention.

In the beginning of practice, the body is tighter and more resistant. A general class outline creates a logical sequence to systematically open the body's major joints before attempting advanced postures.

Postures can be classified into categories related to their orientation and anatomical effect on the body. The categories are:

- Standing postures
- Hip openers
- Forward bends
- Backbends
- Twists
- Inversions
- Leg balancing
- Arm balancing
- Abdominals
- Restoratives
- Yin

Fixed and Variable Sequencing

There are a number of specific postures to work with within each category listed above. Some systems of yoga such as Ashtanga Vinyasa follow a specific sequence without variations. After the student completes one sequence of asana proficiently, they move to the next sequence, or series of postures.

The benefits of a fixed sequence are:

- The practitioner has a flow to follow that can be memorized and internalized.
- Progress can be measured against a fixed variable—the sequence being practiced.
- Self-led practice in a group or with friends is easier, as everyone knows the flow.

The drawbacks are:

- Postures within the fixed sequence may be difficult or impossible for some students to accomplish because of bone structure l mitations.
- Following a fixed sequence may create a robotic approach to asana practice.
- Following a fixed sequence does not provide an opportunity to creatively sequence appropriate postures in personal practice or teaching.

As a new teacher or practitioner developing a self-practice, it is valuable to have a sequence to follow, and then begin to introduce a variety of postures to suit your own practice and to vary your teaching.

Principles of Sequencing

In general, class should begin with some form of centering and progress through a logical sequence of postures that move from simple to more complex and challenging. After the apex of the class, use postures that re-balance and quiet the body and mind before Savasana.

Sequence of posture categories for a balanced class:

- Seated posture–centering
- Warm-up (simple, accessible postures or movements i.e. cat/cow)
- Downward facing dog
- Sun Salutations
- Standing postures
- Inversions (headstand or variations)
- Arm balances
- Reclining hero posture (prep for backbends)
- Backbends
- Shoulder-stand
- Twists
- Forward bends
- Savasana

To create a class using this template, move down the list sequentially, picking the categories of postures that fit your class focus that day (a balance of postures, a focus on back-bending, forward-bending, arm balancing, and so on).

Entrainment – Centeringthe Class

There is a principle called "Entrainment" discovered by the physicist Christian Huygens in 1666. Essentially, the strongest energetic force within a given area will have the effect of drawing the lighter, or weaker forces into its energetic pattern. An example of this can be seen in a clock with a pendulum. If several pendulum-driven clocks are placed in the same room and given a period of time to entrain, the heaviest pendulum will draw the lighter pendulums into its rhythmic pattern. This principle is also at work within any group of people, and is essential in creating a class environment where a transmission of true teaching can occur. As the teacher, you are in the role of the "heaviest pendulum." This requires your energy to be as bright as possible: well rested, prepared, and connected to your inner teacher. Take the time to greet students as they come into class and have them sit comfortably, using props if necessary. Centering the class could include a short period of meditation, noticing the breath, performing an invocation or a simple OM. As you introduce yourself you can also provide a context for the class, using your intention or theme to add meaning. When you begin to give postural instructions, pause to observe that your instructions are being heard and followed before moving to the next posture. This will also create entrainment and provide a safer class environment.

Sequencing a Mixed Level Class

All classes are really mixed level, as no two students will have exactly the same ability, energy level, and physical limitations. Making the class accessible to all students and challenging enough for the most able of students is one of the goals of a successful class. Utilize the options of Vinyasa, jump-switch or step up and back for transitions.

Use the following sequence for your self-practice. Internalize the sequence before you teach it: this will allow you to place your attention on the students rather than on trying to remember the next posture.

- Seated posture (legs crossed, half or full lotus).
- Introduce intention. Begin Ujjayi breath
- Supta Padangustasana (hands behind thigh)
- Adho Mukha Svanasana (down dog)
- Lunge (fingers on floor)
- Surya Namaskara (3 times)
- Trikonasana (triangle pose)
- Parsvakonasana (side angle)
- Parsvottanasana
- Prasarita Padottanasana (wide leg standing forward bend) A and C
- Utthita Hasta Padangustasana (hand to big toe balance)
- Rajakapotasana prep (king pigeon posture prep.)
- Agnistambhasana (double pigeon)
- Bakasana (crow)
- Balasana (child's pose)
- Navasana (boat) variations
- Virasana (hero)
- Supta Virasana (supine hero)
- Ustransana (camel)
- Setu Bandhasana (bridge posture)
- Urdhva Dhanurasana (full wheel) variations
- Marichyasana-C (twist)
- Dandasana (staff posture)
- Upavistha Konasana (wide leg forward bend)
- Janu Sirsasana (one leg forward bend)
- Meditation/Pranayama
- Savasana

Practicum

Homework

You must fulfill your non-contact hours in study and practice. It is understood that throughout this course you will develop a personal yoga practice that includes asana practice, meditation, Pranayama and study of philosophy. Below, please answer the questions in your own words and in paragraph form:

1. Describe your experience of asana practice, the differences between self-practice, practice with friends, and led practice.
2. Describe how to set the foundation in the feet, and why it would be important before beginning asana practice, physically, and philosophically.
3. Explain the difference between asana practice with bandhas, and without.
4. Why is Savasana important?
5. Describe muscular tension and compressive forces within the body. Explain why it might be important to be able to differentiate between the two.
6. Write a sequence of postures for a fifty-five-year-old new student with very tight hamstrings.
7. Write a sequence of postures for a twenty-year-old flexible, but muscularly undeveloped student.
8. Prescribe some postures for a forty-year old body-builder who would like a tenminute daily routine she can do herself to provide more mobility in her shoulders.
9. Why is the knee joint one of the most injured joints?
10. Describe your experience, if any, of the energetic body and its affects on your moods and thoughts.
11. Who is B.K.S. Iyengar and who taught him yoga?
12. How many elements are present in the human body in Tantric philosophy?
13. Who was Patanjali, what is a "Sutra," and what is "Citta"?
14. What is the most important role a yoga teacher plays?
15. Describe a physical adjustment to aid a student with low back pain, who is otherwise uninjured.
16. Describe your experience of a 5-minute meditation, a 15-minute, and a 30 minute.

Class Sequences

1. Write a sequence of postures for a 15-minute class, leaving some time for centering and a brief relaxation. The class is an introduction to yoga for new students.
2. Write a flow of postures for a fast-paced, 30 minute class with a focus on twists and forward bends.
3. Write a sequence of more restorative postures, spending up to 3 minutes in each posture. Class is 45 minutes long.

Develop Intention for Classes

1. Create an overall class intention based on the idea of strength. Consider the various ways we experience strength: physically, emotionally, and psychologically.
2. Create an intention based on the concept of receiving and giving.
3. Create an intention based on the concept of Yin and Yang, or any two polarities.
4. Create your own intention for self-practice, write a series of postures that work well with it.
5. Choose a poem or song and relate the words to a class intention.
6. Choose a book (preferably related to yoga in some way) that resonates with you.
7. Write a brief synopsis of the book, why you like it, and how it could benefit someone.
8. Tell someone some detail you notice that reveals an innate quality they possess.

Class Preparation Sheet

(You are not required to teach 36 postures per class. Fill in what you will teach).

Name:

Date:

Type of Class (all levels, beginner, flow, etc):

Intention (What is your class about?):

Duration:

Props needed:

Demonstration focus
(if applicable, a specific posture or approach):

Asana Practice (Chose postures that work well within your overall class intention)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
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9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.
16.

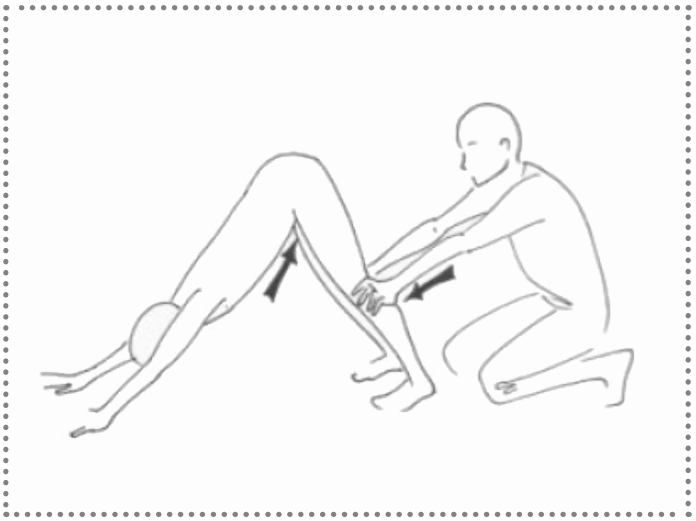
Posture (Time held or breath count)

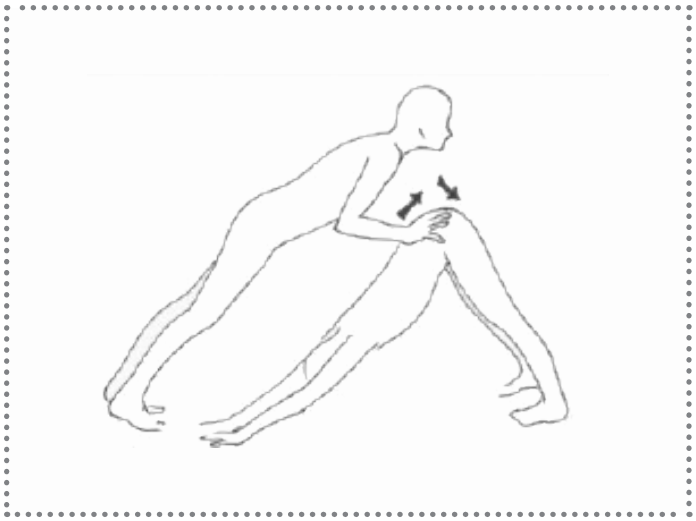
Posture (Time held or breath count)

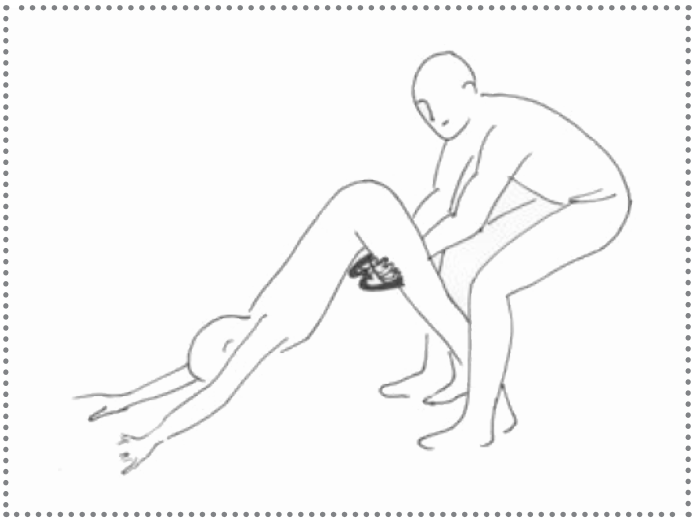
Hands-on Adjustments

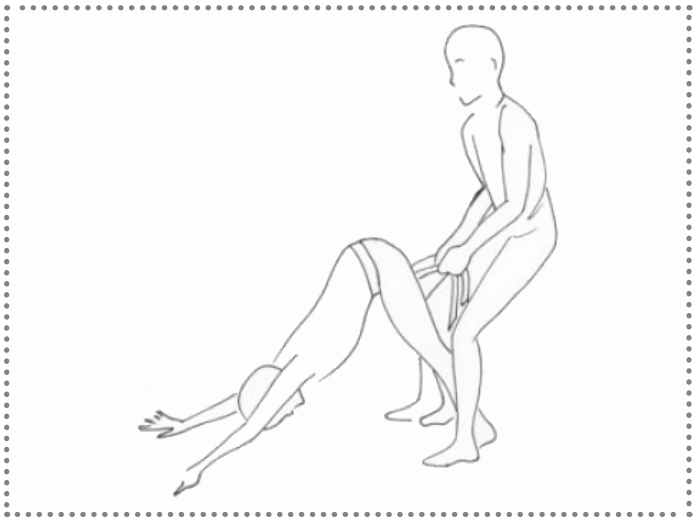
Your notes here:

Adho Mukha Svanasana

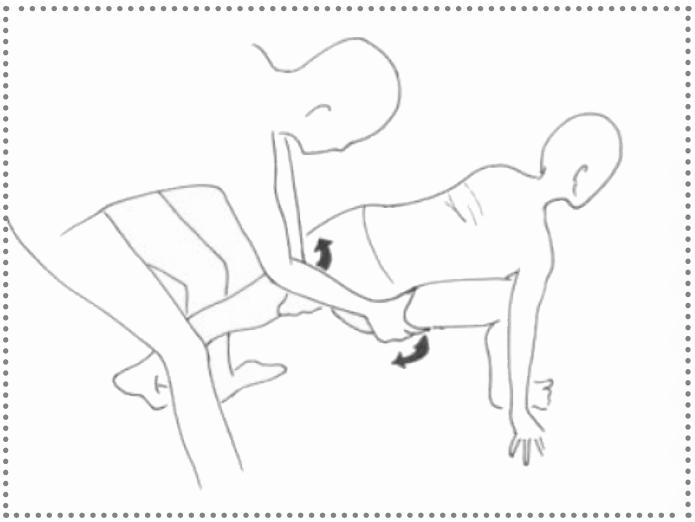








Lunge



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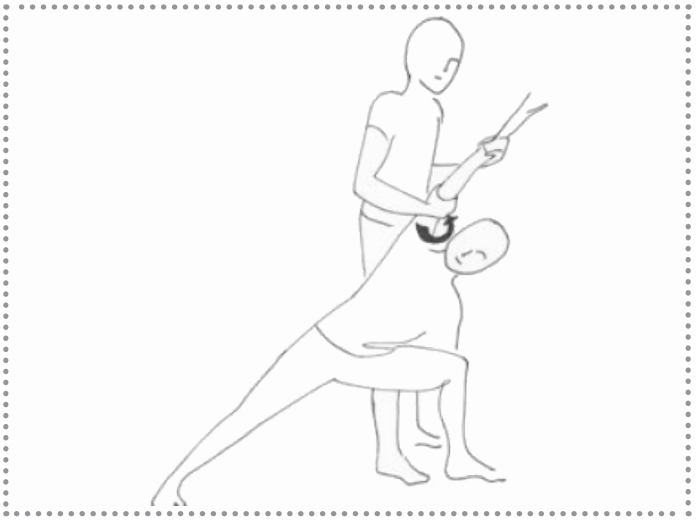
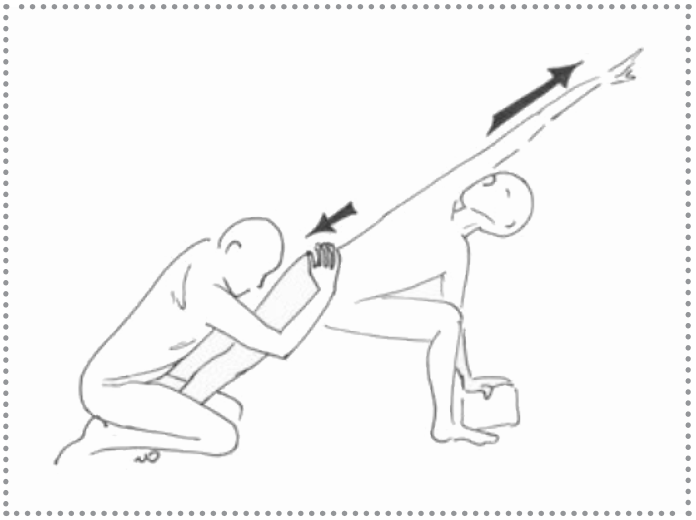
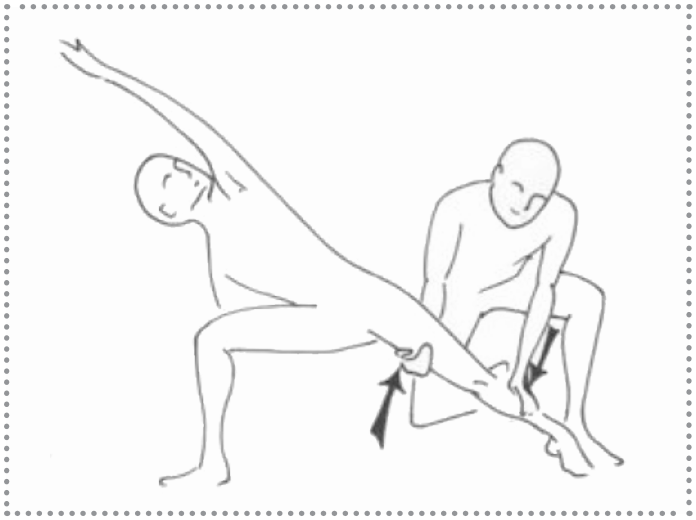
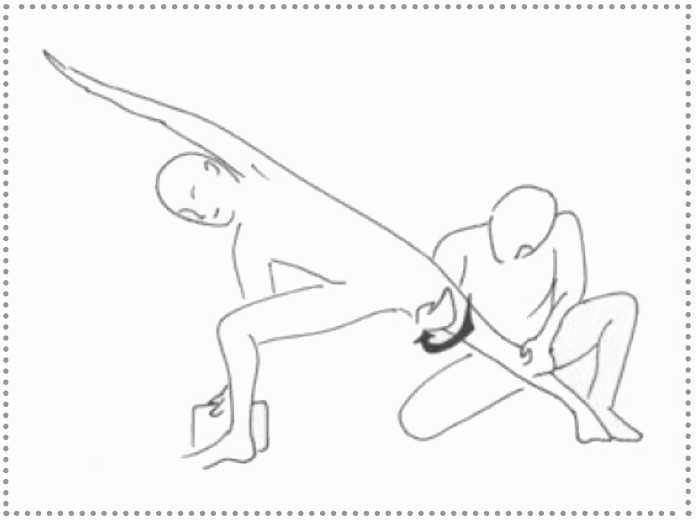
Parsvakonasana









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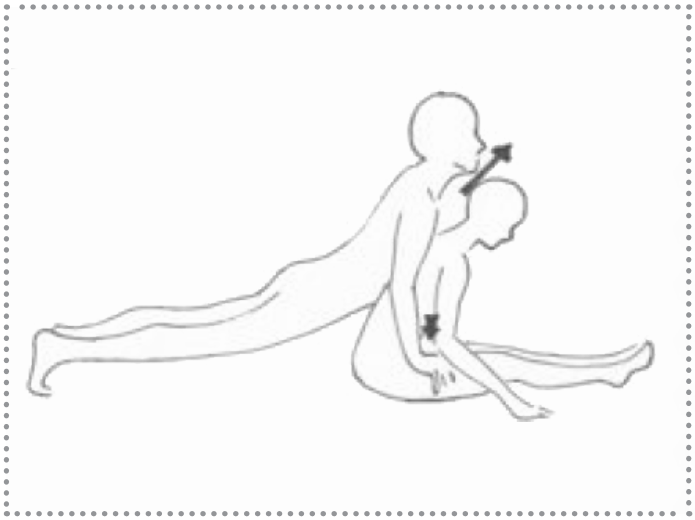
Paschimottanasana



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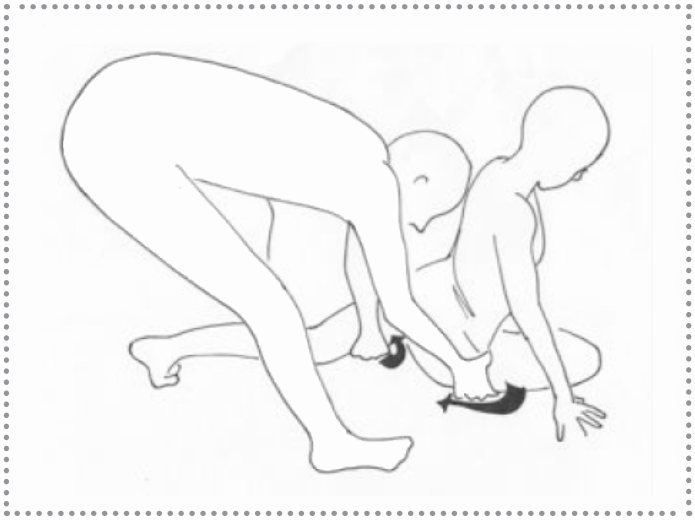
Rajakapotasana



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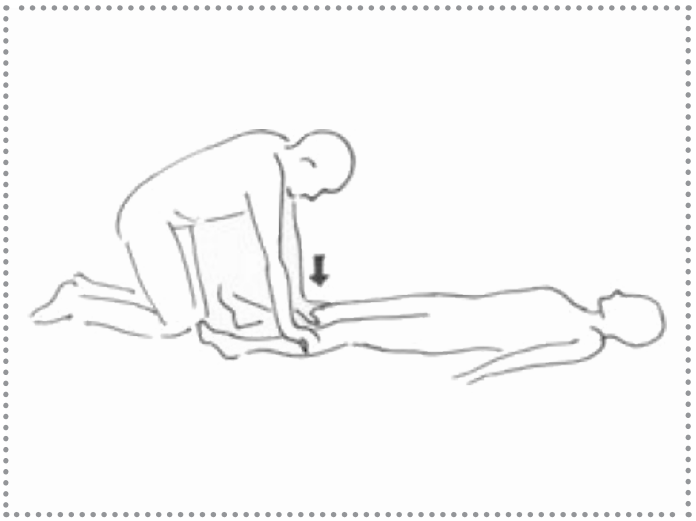
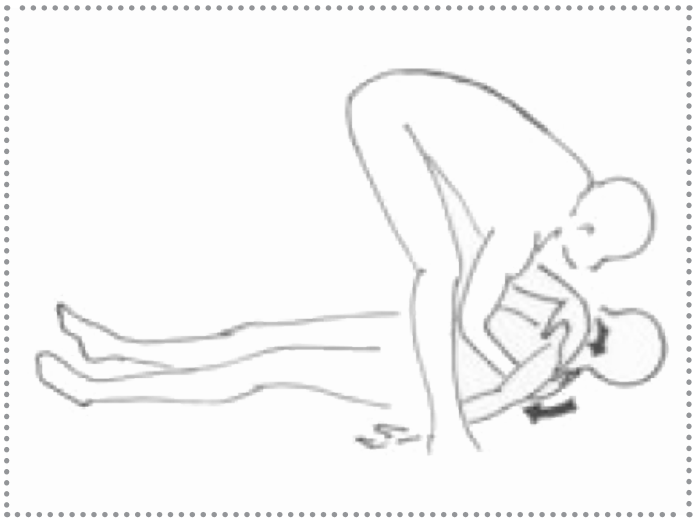
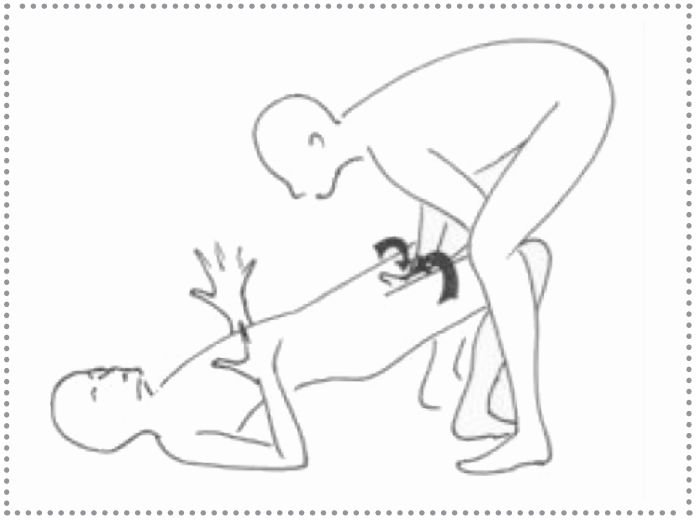
Savasana

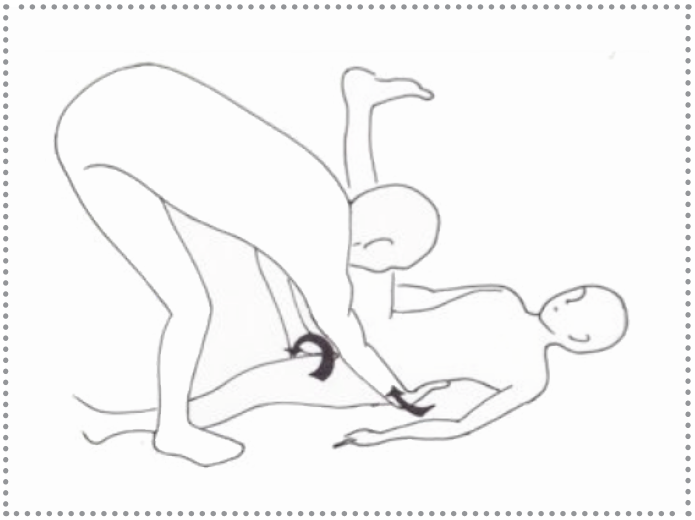


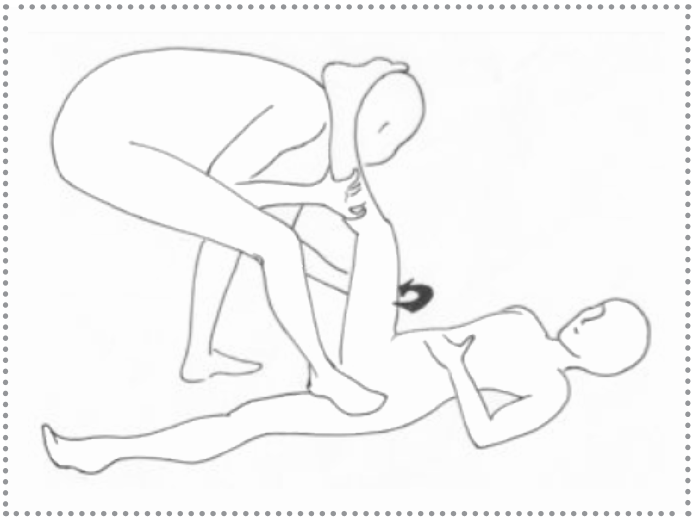


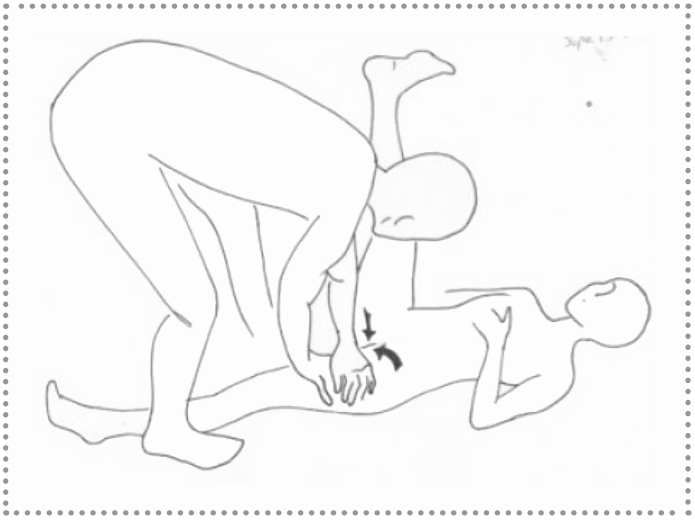
Setu Bandhasana

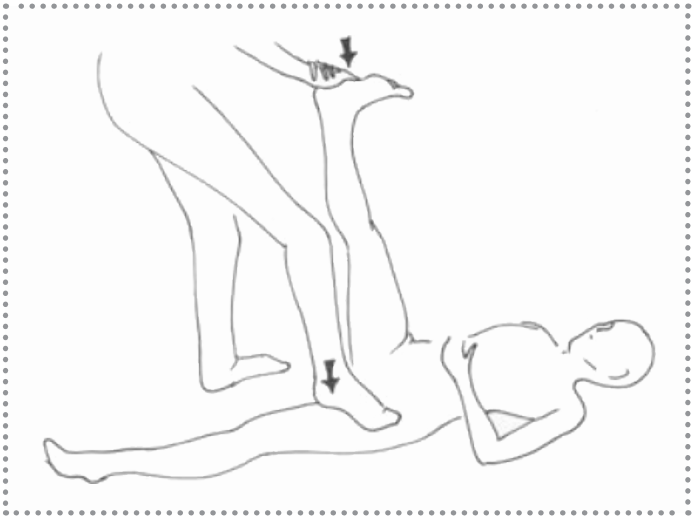


Supta Padangustasana









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Tadasana

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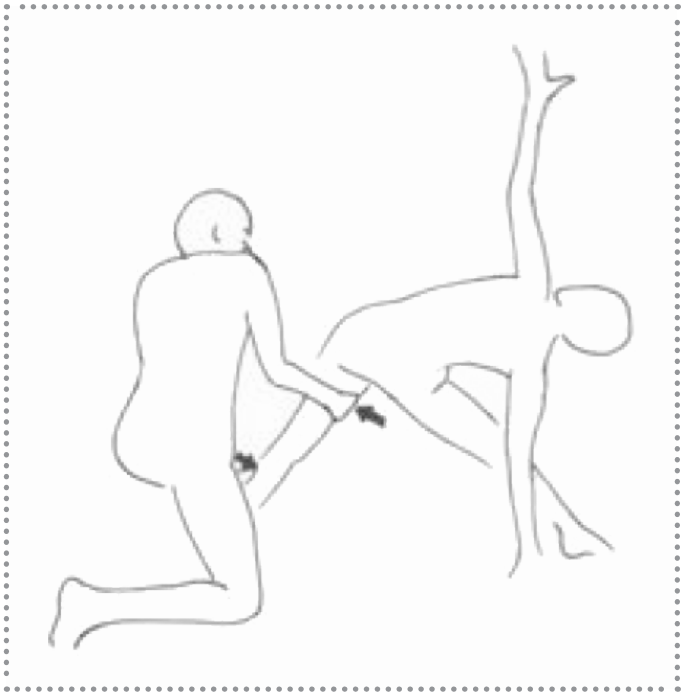
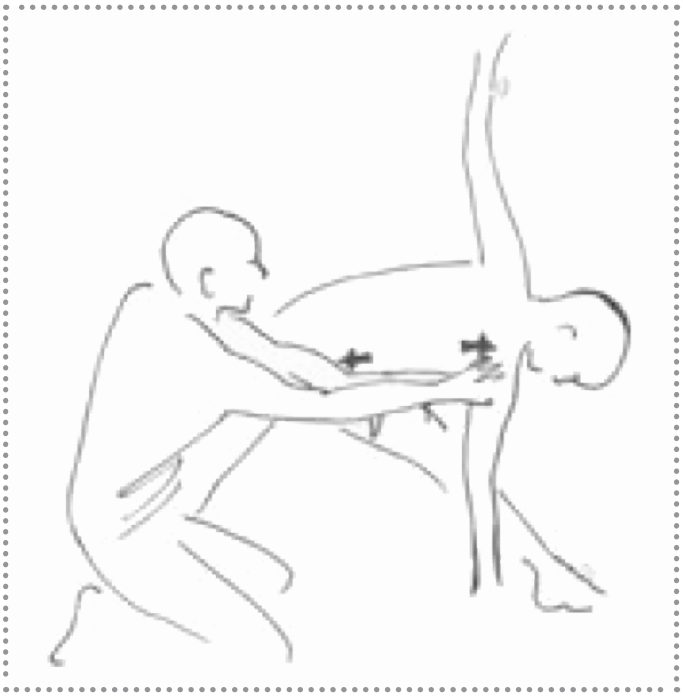
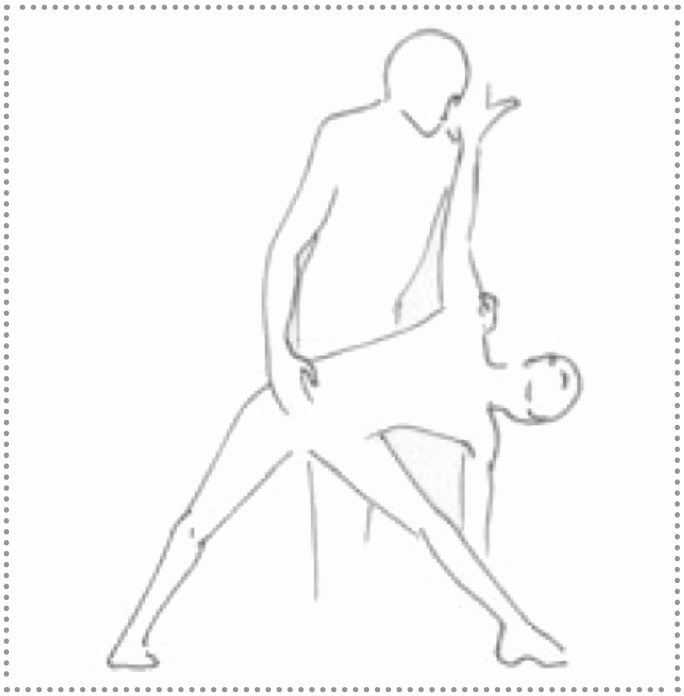
Trikonasana







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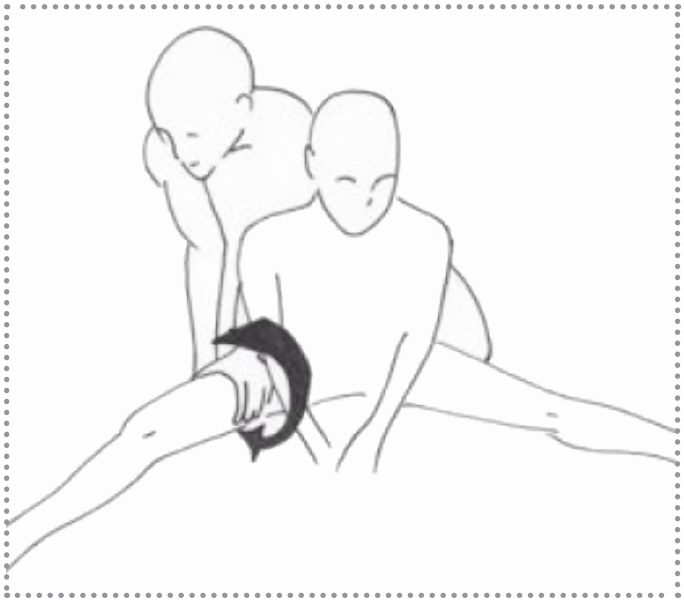
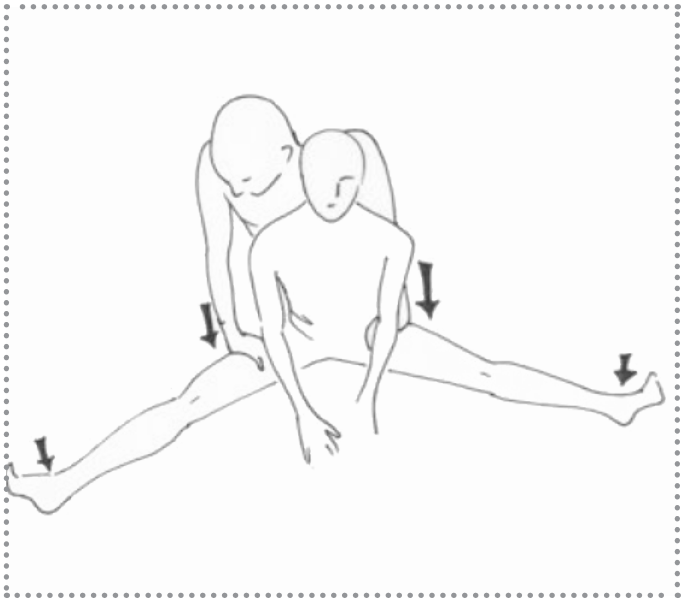
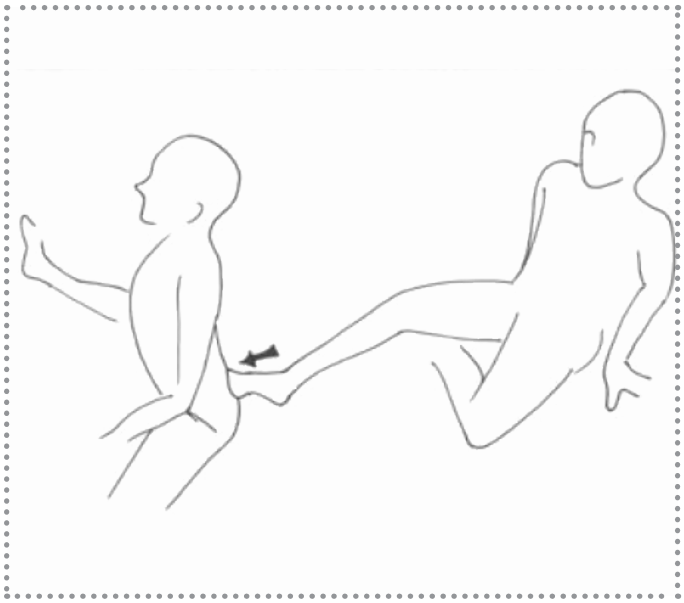
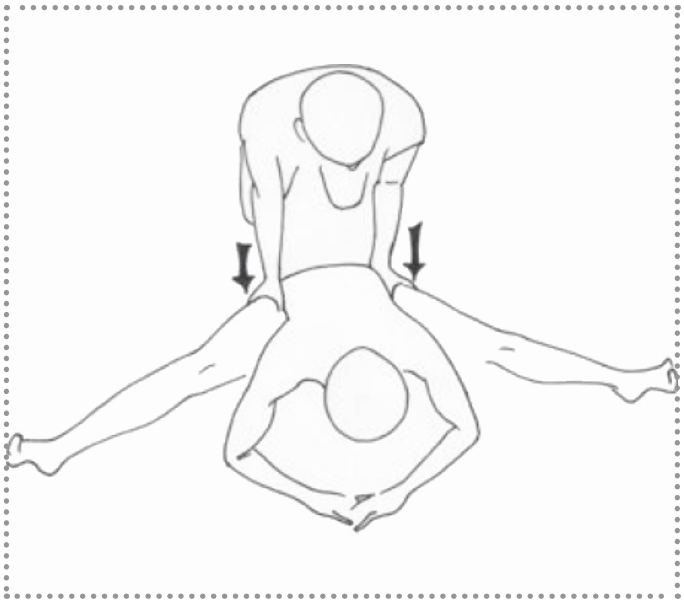
Upavistha Konasana









Notes

Uttanasana

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